

gate in an area where the car may be safely parked. This area is blessed with a reasonable quantity of thinly scattered plants of *A. vulgare*. Though the site has been well worked by myself and colleagues in the last two years, careful examination of my diaries indicates that we have never before operated in the "mugwort zone", even though we have trapped on nine occasions during 1993 and 1994 between 21st June and 22nd July – the first and last recorded dates for the species in Britain. The possibility that the species is an extremely local resident should not be overlooked though subsequent searching for swollen tips of foodplant has proved fruitless to date.

I should like to thank the Essex Wildlife Trust for permission to record invertebrates at their Rushey Mead Nature Reserve and the reserve's Warden, Colin Taylor, for his enthusiastic help and assistance on site. It should be added that a permit is required to collect insects at all Essex Wildlife Trust nature reserves.— COLIN W. PLANT, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QP.

***Amphipoea fucosa paludis* Tutt (Lep.: Noctuidae) in Oxfordshire**

Three specimens of the Saltern Ear, *Amphipoea fucosa paludis*, were collected from mercury vapour traps in a garden at Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire, the first on 31st July 1990, another on 20th August 1992 and the third on 30th July 1994. Their identity was confirmed by examination of the genitalia. Evidently these are the first records of this species for Oxfordshire. The moth is normally associated with coastal areas, especially salt marshes, where it can be common, and its occurrence so far inland is remarkable unless, of course, it has been overlooked and mistaken for *A. oculea* (L.) which, in the event, is rare at the Long Wittenham site, with only one record since trapping began in July 1989. Possibly the moth has extended its range up the River Thames (which passes within 500 metres of the garden), as has the Brown-tail, *Euproctis chryorrhoea* (L.) (Lymantriidae), another mainly coastal species regularly recorded at the same site.— DENIS F. OWEN AND MARTIN TOWNSEND, 42 Little Wittenham Road, Long Wittingham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4QS.

The first light trap, 1st century AD

I was interested to read Brian Gardiner's account of a 16th century description of a light trap to catch wax moths (*Ent. Rec. J. Var.* **107**: 45-46). The passage he quotes is in fact a fairly faithful translation from the Roman author Columella's treatise on agriculture written in AD60-65 (*De Re Rustica* IX.14.9). Columella does not claim to be the inventor of the technique in question, although he is the earliest surviving author to mention it, closely followed by his contemporary Pliny (*Natural History* XXI.81). Wax moths were well known to the bee-keepers of the ancient world and are described by a number of Greek and Latin authors, as discussed in my *Insects and other invertebrates in classical antiquity*, Exeter, 1988.

— IAN C. BEAVIS, 104 St. James' Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.